

In the Claims

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the communication network is wireless.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the bill is automatically generated.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the dispatch division also receives information related to the reports of malfunctions.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the one of the reports of malfunctions is associated with a twisted pair number that represents the first line number.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the dispatch division re-routes the at least one dispatched technician from the first subscriber location to the location different from the vicinity of the first subscriber location based on the information related to the one of the reports of malfunctions.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the one of reports of malfunctions and the another one of the reports of malfunctions are associated with first and second twisted pairs that represent the first and second line numbers.

12-18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of deferring subsequent dispatch of technicians to subscriber locations other than the different location.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of processing reports of malfunctions received by a network service company having a dispatch division and a billing division, the method comprising:

receiving reports from a customer of malfunctions and a request for a network evaluation;

dispatching a technician in response to the reports;

receiving, via a communications network, information sent by the technician upon diagnosing a malfunction at a first subscriber location having a first line number, wherein the information is provided in an electronic format and when analyzed indicates a cause of the malfunction underlying one of the reports of malfunctions sent from a vicinity of the first subscriber location and wherein the cause is at a location other than the first subscriber location, wherein the cost associated with the technician at the first location is recorded in association with the first line number, and wherein the identified cause indicates a range of line numbers that are affected including the first line number;

determining, by the dispatch division and based upon the information sent by the technician upon diagnosing the malfunction at the first subscriber location, that a cause underlying another one of the reports of malfunctions, received from a location different from the vicinity of the first subscriber location and having a second line number, is the same cause identified as underlying the report of malfunction at the first subscriber location due to the second line number being within the range of line numbers that are affected;

identifying, by the company, an entity other than a first subscriber of the first subscriber location that is responsible for the cause; and

utilizing the information, by the billing division, to generate a bill to the entity other than the first subscriber that includes costs incurred at least for diagnosing the malfunction at the first subscriber location by looking up the range of line numbers associated with the cause for which the entity is responsible, finding that the first line number falls within the range, looking up the costs incurred for the first line number, and including the costs incurred for the first line number on the bill to the entity.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, wherein determining, by the dispatch division and based upon the information sent by the technician upon diagnosing the malfunction at the first subscriber location, that a cause underlying another one of the reports of malfunctions, received from a location different from the vicinity of the first subscriber location, is the same cause identified as underlying the report of malfunction at the first subscriber location comprises receiving, via the communications network, information sent by another technician upon diagnosing a malfunction at the different location which is a location of a second subscriber, wherein the information is provided in an electronic format and identifies a cause of the malfunction underlying one of the reports of malfunctions sent from a vicinity of the second subscriber.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the cause of the malfunction is determined to be at a third location, the method further comprising:

dispatching a technician to the third location and repairing the cause of the malfunction at the third location; and

including in the bill to the entity the costs incurred for servicing the second subscriber and the costs incurred for repairing the cause of the malfunction at the third location in addition to the costs incurred for servicing at least the first subscriber.

23. (Currently Amended) A method of processing reports of malfunctions received by a network service company having a dispatch division and a billing division, the method comprising:

receiving reports from a customer of malfunctions and a request for a network evaluation;

dispatching technicians in response to the reports;

receiving, via a communications network, information sent by the technician upon diagnosing a malfunction at a first subscriber location that is assigned a first line number, wherein the information is provided in an electronic format and that allows the dispatch division to identify a cause of the malfunction underlying one of the reports of malfunctions sent from a vicinity of the first subscriber location and wherein the cause is at a location other than the first subscriber location, wherein the cost associated with the technician at the first location is recorded in association with the first line number, and wherein the identified cause indicates a range of line numbers that are affected including the first line number;

receiving, via the communications network, information sent by another technician upon diagnosing a malfunction at a location of a second subscriber that is assigned a second line number, wherein the information is provided in an electronic format and allows the dispatch division to identify a cause of the malfunction underlying one of the reports of malfunctions sent from a vicinity of the second subscriber to be the same cause of the malfunction underlying one of the reports of malfunctions sent from the vicinity of the first subscriber, and wherein the cost associated with the technician at the location of the second subscriber;

repairing the cause underlying both of the reports of malfunctions sent from the vicinity of the first subscriber and sent from the vicinity of the second subscriber and associating cost of the repair with the cause;

identifying, by the company, an entity other than a first subscriber of the first location and a second subscriber of the second location that is responsible for the cause; and

utilizing the information, by the billing division, to generate a bill to the entity other than the first subscriber and the second subscriber that includes the costs incurred for diagnosing the malfunction at the first subscriber location, for diagnosing the malfunction at the second subscriber location, and for repairing the cause by looking up the range of line numbers associated with the cause for which the entity is responsible,

finding that the first line number and the second line numbers fall within the range, looking up the costs incurred for the first line number and the second line number, and including the costs incurred for the first line number and the second line number on the bill to the entity.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the cause of the malfunction is determined to be at a third location that is different than the vicinity of the first subscriber and the vicinity of the second subscriber.